

NWEA Instructional Resources

10 Ways to Use the Class Breakdown by Overall RIT and Class Breakdown by Goal Reports in the Classroom

Note: The Class Breakdown by Goal report is linked to DesCartes: A Continuum of Learning. Please see “Use of DesCartes” on page 4.

1. Use the Class Breakdown by Overall RIT report to see a visual picture of general performance of the class.

The Class Breakdown by Overall RIT report provides a visual representation of the academic diversity in performance of the class in Mathematics, Reading, Language Usage, Science Concepts and Processes, and General Science. The Class Breakdown by Goal report can be accessed by clicking on each subject.

Teacher Tip: Look for the range of performance in the class by the number of RIT bands in which students are listed. The more RIT bands in which students are listed, the greater the academic diversity of the group.

2. Use the Class Breakdown by Goal report to identify academic strengths and areas of concern for individuals.

Students are listed in the appropriate RIT band based on their performance in each goal area. By comparing the student performance in the goal area to their overall RIT score (in parenthesis), relative strengths and weaknesses can be identified for each student.

Teacher Tip: Look at the goal area RIT bands in which the student is placed relative to the student’s overall RIT score in the subject, in order to gain additional insights about the strengths and areas of concern for that student. For example, Number Sense should be considered an area of concern for a student who is listed in the 201-210 RIT band in Number Sense, yet has an overall Math RIT score of 217.

3. Set classroom goals.

The report shows where students are clustered in terms of performance. A cluster of students in a specific goal area with relatively low performance can provide guidance in selecting a class goal. In addition, a cluster of students with relatively strong performance in a goal area would indicate a strength for the class and a cause for celebration.

Teacher Tip: Periodically focus lessons and activities on the specific goal area to address the class goal.

4. Obtain program-specific information.

This report makes the potential needs of certain students more visible. Some students on the outer ends of the scale may need to be considered for special programs, such as Title I, Gifted and Talented, etc.

Teacher Tip: Look at this information related to other information you have on students. Is additional testing needed on a student to determine if they qualify or are in need of special services? NWEA data is *one* data piece that can be used to support placement decisions.

5. Create flexible groups for specific skill instruction.

Students who are clustered within the same RIT band or adjacent RIT bands may have similar academic needs in that specific goal area. This can be the basis for creating flexible groups. These groups may differ from goal area to goal area based on student performance.

Teacher Tip: An easy way to begin to use this report is to consolidate the class into three sections (some columns may need to be combined) and focus instruction around those three groupings.

6. Identify student groupings for differentiating instruction.

This report represents the entire achievement spectrum within each goal area. The amount of academic diversity may indicate the need to differentiate instruction in order to meet the needs of the students in the class.

Teacher Tip: Select one goal area to start with. Design several different lessons within the goal area to meet the needs of the groups you have identified as having different academic needs.

7. Share information with other grade level teachers for intra- and inter- grade level grouping.

A comparison of this report with the reports of other teachers, both within the same grade level and in other grade levels, can be used to identify students with similar academic needs in other classes.

Teacher Tip: After comparing your class with other teachers, think about the following questions: Is there a better way to organize ourselves around a subject or goal area in order to meet the needs of all students? What lessons or materials might other teachers have that can help me teach the range of students in my class? By working together as a team, the load may become easier in planning for several RIT bands within a goal area. If each teacher were to plan the activities around one RIT band, all teachers could benefit from that initial planning. It may also be appropriate to have students move from one teacher to another during certain goal areas or lessons.

8. Transition into DesCartes for instructional planning.

The Class Breakdown by Goal report is linked to DesCartes. A .pdf file containing a cover sheet and the associated goal area and RIT band in DesCartes can be accessed by clicking on the student name or on the **all students in range** link to select all students within that band. The DesCartes page will show three columns. The “Skills and Concepts to Develop” (middle) column is the one that is aligned to the student’s current instructional level. The column on the left indicates “Skills and Concepts to Enhance” – skills in which a student would be expected to have a solid understanding. The column on the right indicates “Skills and Concepts to Introduce” – the road map for the direction of student instruction.

Teacher Tip: Use DesCartes as a starting place to focus instruction for an individual student or a group of students in a particular goal area.

9. Select appropriate materials for instruction.

The entire range of the specific goal area within DesCartes can be accessed by clicking on the goal area name in the Class Breakdown by Goal report. DesCartes is a representation of the items in the NWEA database (not necessarily everything in a teacher's local curriculum).

Teacher Tip: Use this information alongside your state and local standards and design a plan for where you can begin to look outside your normal realm of materials and find other resources to support your efforts to help students who are further behind or to continue growth in students in the upper range of their class. It may be a good idea to create a shared library of lessons in your building that all teachers can access when trying to teach a certain objective.

10. Compare class growth with a visual snapshot from fall to spring.

A visual measure of class growth can be made by comparing the reports of two or more different testing seasons.

Teacher Tip: Lay your fall report next to your spring report and look for the number of students who moved at least one RIT band to the right.

Use of DesCartes

The purpose of DesCartes is to help guide instruction based on reports from Measure of Academic Progress (MAP). DesCartes enhances a teacher's ability to provide targeted instruction for individual students or groups of students. It is not intended to be a replacement for district curriculum or standards that are already in place.

DesCartes contains separate sections for each subject in mathematics, reading, language usage, lower grades mathematics, upper grades mathematics, science concepts and processes, and science with general science. Within each section are the main goal strands which are also the main reporting areas in your tests. The goal strands are then broken down into ten-point RIT bands. Within each band, sub-categories, which further divide the content within the goal area, break down the skills and concepts found in the NWEA item banks.

In creating DesCartes, we have attempted to create one continuous document representing skills and concepts as they progress in difficulty. The order of learning continuum statements is not based on any one district's "curriculum" but the difficulty of NWEA test items. The organization of the statements is based on the organization of the items for testing and reporting. One important note about the mathematics sections of DesCartes is that all skills and concepts are provided for both Lower Grades and Upper Grades. The Lower Grades section reflects the content identified in the lower grades of the state standards for any state version of DesCartes. In the Upper Grades section the learning continuum statements for all grades are together in one section, regardless of the "typical" grade level in which they are introduced. Using multiplication as an example, items that reflect simple concepts and processes related to multiplication are first seen in the 180 and 190 RIT ranges. Many 2nd grade students already achieve scores in this range, but most of them won't receive formal instruction in multiplication until grade 3 or 4. We don't anticipate that 2nd graders performing at 190 would be immediately taught multiplication. Instead, a 190 suggests that someone achieving in this range, regardless of age and grade, is ready to grasp this concept when the appropriate time comes.

Many concepts and skills within DesCartes cross several RIT bands. The RIT we associate with a concept is not purely reflective of the concept's difficulty. A concept's difficulty is also affected by the complexity, cognitive demand, and format of the tasks (in NWEA's case items) that we associate with the concept. Asking a student to multiply 26×9 is a lower RIT task than asking students to solve a multiplication story problem in which they have to determine the proper arithmetic operation and apply it to the right numbers in an application situation.

Learning continuum statements describe skills and concepts that cross several RIT bands appear at the earliest RIT band where they are prominently seen and where item data supports it, they may appear in up to three adjacent RIT bands. As a result, we recommend that educators think of skills like computation with fractions, as skills that are first introduced at a relatively low RIT range (in this case about 200) and build in cognitive demand and complexity as the student advances.

Only skills and concepts tested by items contained in the NWEA item banks are listed in DesCartes. We realize that many districts have additional topic areas that will not show up here. We encourage them to use DesCartes as a tool to supplement the resources already in use by a district.